I am Kelly Oates, kelly@oates.com, and I've learned that the second zine is easier to write than the first one. For me, anyway.

The Oracle

This toss feels overwhelming, like it's trying to contain everything at once. Pure yang energy, above and below, shifting and flowing into water upon water, merging completely. Readings rarely feel this unified, this massive in scope. I've been working through several sources, and I keep thinking there should be a way to parse them like John D. Berry weaves history and typography together—those subtle annotations that guide you through the complexity.

Maybe this reading is actually reflecting the current state of everything? Let me dig into it: Hexagram 1 (The Dragon, The Taking, Tao, Becoming) transforming into Hexagram 58 (Joy). Two pages and three drafts later, the path leads to joy. That's it!, the Tao becomes Joy.

Le Guin warns that "translation of Hexagram 1 as 'The Taking' is perfectly impossible. It contains the book... if you see it rightly, it contains everything." No wonder my attempts kept expanding into something book-length!

I'm swimming in dragons, holy spirit, animation, ecstatic states, spiritual possession: all yang, all creative force. These are states that exist beyond our usual sense of self. Lord Byron captures the bright light well:

Yes, Love indeed is light from heaven / A spark of that immortal fire / With angels shared, by Alia given / That lift the earth from our low desire

And Le Guin's translation hits differently:

So the unwanting soul sees what's hidden, / And the ever-wanting soul / Sees only what it wants. / Two things, one origin, but different in name, / Whose identity is mystery, / Mystery of all mysteries / The door to the hidden.

The shift to Joy feels like instruction: find this spirit within yourself, connect with it, actually express it. The work isn't always smooth—sometimes learning requires getting knocked around a bit. When you fall, dust yourself off and get back up, but leave that chip on your shoulder in the dirt. Do the work, get your hands dirty. Turning ideas into reality takes serious effort. We're looking for that sweet spot where our actions align with what the universe is trying to create through us.

I kept circling back to Hexagram 1, the way you do when working through a complex reading, trying to understand its warning about arrogance and fear. Le Guin gets at these aspects of strength: And so, *The wise shape without cutting / Square without sawing / True without forcing. / They are the light that does not shine.*

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In Joy, we access dragon-level spirit and strength—so what's with the caution? I keep thinking of a guitar string under perfect tension, vibrating with potential at every point, flexible and strong simultaneously. The energy can stretch incredibly far without losing its core tension. Dynamic potential, ready to act.

And naturally, after pages of wrestling with oracles and wisdom, the universe drops this into my morning reading (attributed to Captain Cook via Pat Murphy's *The Adventures of Mary Darling*):

"Apparent Contradiction": *Some have one eye, / One Leg, one hand. / The complete pirate / Has some parts missing.*

The Other Oracle

The Lands End Fortune Telling Deck from the Golden Gate Conservancy is, as they say on the web site, more than just a tool for fortune telling: it's a gateway to self-discovery and personal growth. When I consulted it to ask about this month's zine, I drew Get Your Feet Wet on a postcard of folks Wading on Ocean Beach (ca 1900). See how things fit together?

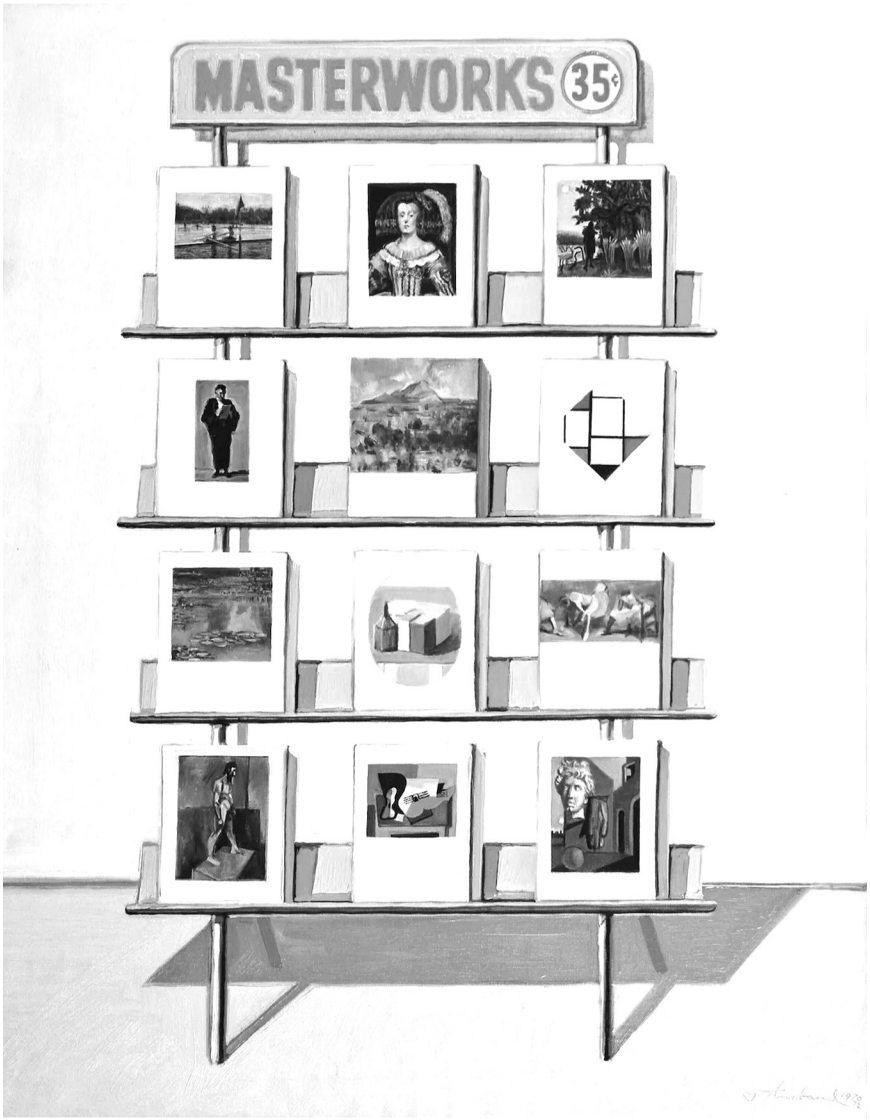
Wayne Thiebaud: Art Comes From Art, A Viewing

Note Bene: all quotes come from the exhibit catalogue "Wayne Thiebaud: Art Comes From Art" by Timothy Anglin Burgard with Rachel Teagle, Eve Ascheheim, and Lauren Palmer, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, University of California Press 2025

I approach art galleries the same way I approach movies: no trailers, no reviews, just the basic info and big names. Buy the ticket, show up, see what happens. The Legion of Honor is one of my favorite buildings anywhere: those marble staircases, the hidden pipe organ, Rodin's *Thinker* brooding in the courtyard, and those amazing views over what has to be the most beautiful bay in the world from any angle. Plus some genuinely cool ancient Roman stuff scattered around. It just puts you in the right headspace.

I grabbed tickets for the Wayne Thiebaud show to go with a friend visiting from out of town, thinking we'd grab one of those iconic cupcakes for lunch if they were doing the whole Thiebaud pastry thing. I almost didn't make it past the display case—they went completely overboard with these curated tiny princess cakes, complete with maraschino cherries on top. So perfectly on-brand. But the prices were over the top. The sandwiches looked amazing, practically overflowing with every type of green you could imagine, but at forty bucks each for the basics including coffee, those little cakes were a hard pass. Took us an hour to eat and catch up properly, then we headed into the gallery.

Which didn't start with the pastries or those vertigo-inducing San Francisco streetscapes I was expecting. What exactly were we looking at? Was this the artist's personal collection of paintings, or the museum's? And what were those slightly fuzzy, off-center pieces underneath in this weird workroom-style display? Why is that obvious masterpiece hang-



ing over what looks like … a derivative? An imitation? With some kind of prism thing in the way? Then the title clicked: "Art Comes From Art."

We're both total nerds about reading every single wall text and description card, hunting for what my friend calls "MFA-speak." But the commentary in this show was actually delightful—no shortage of incredible quotes from Thiebaud himself. Starting with: "Art is not delivered like the morning paper; it has to be stolen from Mount Olympus." "My world is one of crime. I steal from every artist around the world." Okay, that's way more direct than I expected from an opening statement. "If I don't have anything better to do that day, I'll copy paintings, generally by people who have some relationship to the work of the moment."

Don't worry! The guy was a professor, so he could also drop lines like "Systemic Sequences: Evidence of a consistent pattern of form issuance without formulaic preoccupation" before his morning coffee.

"In Cezanne there is always a swelling, like the volume trying to get away from the plane, even though there is also a linear matrix. It's like trying to have both worlds simultaneously. If this kind of anthologizing procedure and interference of spatial concerns can be evident in painting, I think it's much more interesting." Thiebaud's 'copy' hangs right next to the Cezanne. They're completely different, but I could see exactly what he was seeing.

"Matisse talks a great deal about how if you don't develop tension, you have a kind of inept deadness, a stasis. It's not so hard to get equivocation, and that equivocation, that sense of is it or isn't it, in terms of the visual logic. That's one of the wonderful questions about how that operates in the long tradition of painting." (Which sounds a lot like divination to me.)

The side-by-side of what Thiebaud painted while studying Cezanne is mesmerizing. Cezanne's nudes in those awkward, dangling, strangely shadowed rooms become completely solid and self-contained in Thiebaud's version—not engaging with the viewer, not distracted by anything. There's such warmth in his work.

He goes on: "Matisse's line is never just a one-dimensional outline. It is partly a sculptural line, and throughout his many periods he extends it to slicing, chopping, hacking, severing, sawing, snipping, nipping, cleaving, slashing, truncating, cropping. These are all ways he has of modifying his forms sculpturally." I'm swooning over here. And then: "Matisse doesn't seem interested in the person as a human being."

There were spots where we had to use the entire room, weaving and peering and shifting our angle to actually see the representation in the painting. Totally worth it for that moment when optical illusions suddenly snap into focus. Both paintings show a man in a suit sitting at a desk. Cezanne's has blurred white pages; Thiebaud has eliminated almost all white except for thin reflections and substituted these wild slashes of color that resolve into books—stacked, jumbled, tumbling off shelves. From any viewpoint, Thiebaud's reader sits there surrounded by beautiful chaos, his desktop arriving in whatever configuration it wants. Cezanne captures wistfulness, consideration, a pen in motion. Thiebaud contemplates.

We both burst out laughing more than once, especially at his riff on Cezanne, who "rearranges objects or people or things to his 'feel'. He'll fuss and fool, finding an arm looks better here than it would have there, and each time he'll give you the agony that goes with it." Cezanne's *Five Bathers* hangs next to Thiebaud's *Five Eating Figures*, each figure in a suit on a beach, casually holding some ridiculous food: ice cream, cotton candy,

soda, popsicles. It's absolutely hilarious. Lounging, striding, toweling off, every figure awkward in monstera prints or polka dots and stripes. Pure joy.

We giggled at a painting of cake plates hanging next to some non-food inspiration piece. But somehow Thiebaud's version occupies the same visual space. How does that even work?

Thiebaud lived in Sacramento and went thrift shopping. Found another artist's work and scored it for two bucks. Says it's one of his favorite reference pieces, then transforms this pleasant landscape waterfall into this immense, looming, almost hellish example of how he does what only he can do with depth and perspective. Those hills actually move. All of them push you around a little.

Moving through the show, I started noticing his color palette, how it holds an idea and carries it forward. Is the guy obsessed with blue? Did he just have buckets of the stuff lying around? Blue shadows everywhere: that gun with its completely wrong shadow angle, any cake (which started making me smile automatically), a fish, city pavement. Those shadows! That gun looks impossibly real until that sky-blue, almost cerulean shadow transforms it into a toy, the taupe background draining all its menace away.

Once I noticed the pastel colors with wrong blue shadows, I started seeing the halos. Like everyday things had become slightly angelic. I took another long look at the edges of everything. No matter where the light seems to come from, Thiebaud finds a color to blur with. Is it highlighting a building or slowly pulling us off a cliff without us realizing we're moving? *The Tie Tray* is a box of ties that looks like a box of bright conte crayons glowing with colors that don't come from any standard color wheel. Edged with rainbows along the fabric, inside the box, all around the outside.

The halos aren't really edges—they're luminous with colors from outside the object's place or time. The rainbow illuminates. Bringing this back to the I Ching and that puzzle of Joy: this is exactly what Le Guin was getting at with that small dark light. It shows me how *"The wise shape without cutting / Square without sawing, true without forcing. / They are the light that does not shine."*

kelly